

We Never Noticed Carcassonne

The towers were there in the South of France, while we wished for the glory of war and never bothered to see them

by HILAIRE DU BERRIER

• ARTICLE •



SURELY, it is a strange thing in man that makes him run away from peace and beauty when he has it.

Some of us were born to be misfits, only to feel like writing poetry beside walls that have been bombed till they look like an exile's memories, to try to cook up revolutions when we find ourselves in peaceful hamlets between a blue sky and a mountain.

Did you ever have that longing to go where boats go and songs are, counting palm trees and caissons and bombers? *The Charge of the Light Brigade* makes your ears drunk and you want to follow sea-gulls and flags and a king's name, no matter how lovely the place where you are.

Another fellow and I were like that once. We wanted to go where armies marched and wars were and all the variousness of adventure.

We had a book we had found in a book-stall beside the Seine, and on its fly-leaf it said: "Death by combat is the natural end of the male."

We hugged that book like a prayer.

Hadn't the king of all soldiers said: "Up to Grenoble I was an adventurer, after Grenoble I was Emperor." We wanted to be like him, but try as we might we never could seem to get beyond Juan-les-pins, and the blue coast.

Only the old seemed to want to stay in peace in Monte Carlo in those days of the early 1930's. The young people we met there were just passing through or trying to make enough money to get away.

Peace was all we had and we were fed up with it.

There were blue sea and warm nights and dark corners and big moons and whispers and a garden, but noise and danger and discomfort called louder than Roland's horn at Roncevaux.

The south of France was the world's garden. You read about war threats and governments falling, but they didn't seem close to you there. Some other country always seemed to be where interest-

ing things were happening.

An English artillery captain and an Indian from Ceylon and I came out of the Casino and I came out of the Casino too broke to go up to Brasserie Pigal and buy a beer one night. The captain said he knew where you could charge one, and we both said in the same breath: "Where?"

He took us down a narrow passageway to a dingy entrance with *Cave Flora* over it, and inside, the proprietor sitting behind a comtoir watching carriage drivers and off-duty croupiers play billard-russe, dismissed the matter of credit with a magnanimous gesture.

His name turned out to be Monsieur Gay, and one of the fine things about Monsieur Gay was he never seemed to resent the fact that people who played in the casino only came around to drink with the ones who worked there when they were broke and wanted to charge it. He was always happy to see them, and when they came to pay up, if they came, he never acted surprised.

His hair over his temples was beginning to turn grey. It had taken him thirty years as a concierge to buy that bistro and somehow he acquired a manner during those concierge years, seeing the great and the near great pass and saying good-morning and good-bye to them, and it never left him.

It wasn't servile. Gracious is more like it. When an unshaven hack-driver with a scarf around his neck for a collar came in he got the same reception Monsieur Gay once gave Sir Basil; and Black Harry, from Ceylon, and the monocoed captain and I got the same reception that he gave to the coachman.

No one could remember Harry's name, so



we just called him "Black Harry" and let the matter rest at that.

The captain was a dignified little fellow who got more dignified as he got more drunk, and he murdered the French language, but every shopkeeper in the Principality called him "le petit capitaine" and loved him.

I remember one of those insolvent periods towards the end of December, we were back in Monsieur Gay's, and the little captain was drinking Pernod with an old British sea-dog named Finlayson who had lived on a boat from the time he was thirteen till they retired him, and now lost his pension at chemin-de-fer the first of every month and lived on Gay like the rest of us till the next came.

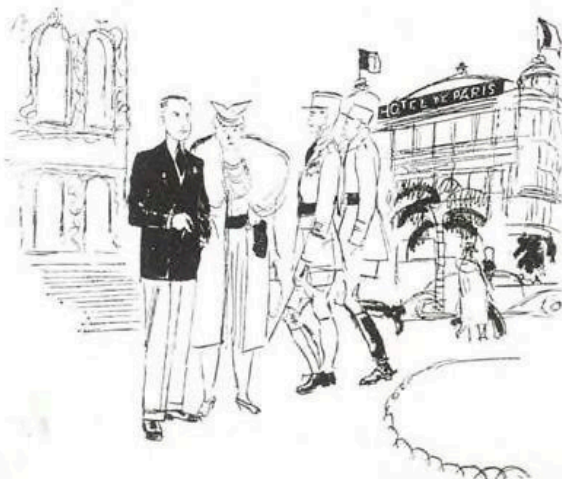
Monsieur Gay listened to our troubles. We were all in a spot. New Year's Eve was coming and we were broke. To make matters worse, the little artillery captain and I had invited a rich American woman and her daughter to have dinner with us. (Later we found out they were broke too.)

"Bring them here. Bring everyone here," said Monsieur Gay. "You can pay me later." I think he wanted a party himself.

We managed to convince the American woman and her daughter that only the usual dull crowd would be at the Sporting Club: the King of Sweden would be there nodding yes to Countess Cavalagno, and General Polovtsov would be entertaining more uninteresting people on a larger scale, that was all.

Barry Wall wouldn't be wearing anything different, and Phillips Oppenheim would be sitting there, smug and opulent and pretending it was wonderful. The old pre-war days when Russian princesses came for the European New Year and threw diamond tiaras on the tables in lieu of chips before they went home for their own holidays are gone forever.

We sold the American lady on the idea of doing something different this year, going out



incognito and getting cock-eyed with the people tourists never see, and she thought it was a fine thought.

Monsieur Gay had a table spread in a private room where the coachmen played belotte; there was a little poule-de-luxe, temporarily down on her luck, across from us. The old sea-dog did a dance and Black Harry, who had lost a million francs at trente-et-quarante, gave the toast on Monsieur Gay's champagne. Monsieur Gay beamed with pride on his accordian player and got drunk with the rest of us.

The American woman and her daughter said they had never had so much fun in their lives. They didn't want to go to the Café de Paris anymore.

I think they were the first cash-paying foreign customers Monsieur Gay ever had, and before long they had brought their friends and we had quite a colony coming up the alley to drink and play checkers with the sacre drivers and chauffeurs.

We walked past a pawnshop with my watch in the window and the antique shop where the pretty blonde was always brushing dust off a pile of knick-knacks.

Everyone that passed that antique shop used to look in the window, but no one ever seemed to buy anything. Just beyond it was the narrow passageway and steps that led down to Cave Flora, and now that I stop to think of it, it seems strange I had never noticed them before.

You could pass that place a hundred times and never think of turning in, if someone didn't take you. Sometimes a tall, dignified man with a dark moustache wandered past, looking in shop windows with the air of trying to find himself there. It was Prince Danilo of Montenegro, whose land had been scratched off of the maps by a pen stroke in 1918.

He had been wandering back and forth across a crazy-quilt of countries ever since.

Looking at him one day, alone, an old line came back: A king who has fallen must see strange sights, so bitter a thing is the heart of man.

Where he went he was stared at without sympathy. Our bistro, where everyone loved everyone else, was the one place he never thought to go.

He and the Grand Duke Dimitri and Prince René de Bourbon-Parme, sat at the Café de Paris and the Beach Hotel, full of tourists who didn't bother to whisper, emptying glasses that didn't seem to make them happy, but they never thought of wandering into little bars up narrow passageways where walls had a warm glow on them.

An old man who lived on Rue de la Costa went by once in a while, but no one knew who he was or anything about him, till one day he died and up in his apartment they found a collection of medals and photos signed by kings and letters from famous people. It was the great Escoffier, the king of chefs, who followed Napoleon III into exile, and we had never paid any attention to him before. He was just like that passageway that led to Cave Flora; he looked so uninteresting and was full of stories if you only bothered to look.



When I look back at old Escoffier now I think of him drinking coffee in little cafés, and looking at the dumb girl I was going with then and me as if he was yearning for someone to talk to, someone young, to remember with and tell how he had carved a swan out of ice and filled it with ice cream and peaches one day to surprise Madame Melba. After that incident people called it Peach Melba.

A man who had sagas stuck away in his mind's cubby-holes, whose memories were like the Tuilleries gardens, who had poetry to his finger-tips, knocked and we wouldn't let him in, thought he was crazy and didn't want to start talking to him for fear he would be hard to get rid of.

The regret that comes over me when I think of Escoffier now I think comes because he was like everything in France, something we shall never find anywhere else, yet didn't bother to look at then, and now have lost forever. It will never be the same again.

To think that back in those days some of us wanted to go to war, just for a spot of excitement. A small war, we said, and watched newspapers hoping one would start somewhere not too far away.

In the meantime one had to pay for a drink in one way or another, and when we didn't have money we could start Monsieur Gay talking about the people he had helped back in the days when he was a Concierge, so he wouldn't notice the advent of another round of drinks.

It burned him up to look back at some of those people who hadn't paid him. Every time he saw Mary Garden he remembered a prima donna whom he had loaned fare to her next engagement when she went broke in the casino.

Because he loved opera he couldn't refuse her, and she never answered his letters afterwards. He said: "If she had only sent me her picture!" when he saw in Paris-

Soir that she was singing in Paris. She spoiled opera for him.

He loaned money to an American woman and she committed suicide, then her family said "Concierges are all robbers!" and would not pay him.

An Egyptian wore his rain-coat out in the gardens to shoot himself.

He gave a palms-up gesture of his hands and said: "C'est la vie!"

Monsieur Gay was Italian by birth but he was ashamed of Italy since Mussolini took it over. He said: "I dislike to say it, but my country is like a Gigolo at the Sporting Club now; All dressed up with fine linens and gold-braided uniforms and sleek hair, and not a sou in its pockets; Tolerated in the company of gentlemen but never really one of them."

Politics was the big subject of conversation around the "Cave" with the coachmen telling what they would do if they ran the country and had an army. They didn't have much respect for politicians, but they loved soldiers and when a carabinier du Prince, came in, in uniform, the habitués were happier than when we got 'Genia Bankhead in there with her monkey.

Eugenia had a Pernod, and Morton Hoyt saw an Aero Golf game in the corner, one of those machines you put a coin in and shoot balls into numbered holes and try to run the score up.

The machine had a slot where you dropped in twenty-five centimes before you could play, and Morton said: "Hell, I'm coming here from now on. It costs a franc to play this where I've been going!"

Major Pollock tried to get Clifford Harmon to use the place as a hide-out when some gold-diggers were chasing him, but Harmon wouldn't come, and a day or two later he was sorry; they were hot on his trail and he had to go back to Barcelona.

Jimmy Lindeman was the most amusing fellow in Nice those days, and stories about

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Eddie and the Piano

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and she took high-priced lessons. She was a pretty girl in a spoiled sort of way, hair always waved, mouth tempting with that touch of latent meanness. She never walked but she flounced. Just as a sideline, you might say, she played Eddie's piano for the girls' gym class, for the marching exercises.

Somebody must have told her about Eddie and us fellows. She went to the superintendent and told him, anyway. She objected to the keys being dirty. School discipline was preserved. Wagner got his orders.

The next day when Eddie came down, Wagner told him it was against the rules to play this worthless old piano, the only one Eddie could find to play.

For a few minutes, Eddie just looked at Wagner, like he couldn't understand, his eyes asking a hundred questions.

"It wasn't us, Eddie," Wagner said. "We like you down here. We like you to be playing."

"Yes, suh."

"But it's against the rules."

"Why?" Eddie asked.

"Well, Eddie, the piano is for gym classes, that's all. It shouldn't be played after school hours."

"I see. Sure, I understand, Mr. Wagner," Eddie said. He tried to smile, like it didn't matter, but he couldn't. All of us fellows were watching. We felt funny inside, like we had hurt a little dog or something. Eddie stared around at us and then he ran up the stairs. He stopped on the second step.

"Thank you, boys, thank you, Mr. Wagner," he yelled and his voice broke and we knew he was crying.

We felt bad for Eddie. We were damned sore about the whole thing. We even considered getting up a petition but Grace gave one of the fellows a date and he convinced us it wouldn't be the best thing. After a while, we became accustomed to not having Eddie around.

He quit school and went into the factory and he had three fingers cut off working in the wareroom five or six years later.

Grace Wilson still plays. She plays in church on Sundays. And she plays lousy as hell. She stinks. #

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Jimmy were endless. His wits were like Masfield wanted the wind to be.

He spoke French like a Frenchman, English like an Englishman, and German like a German. His own brothers had been in Germany in the army in the last war while Jimmy was there as a spy for the British.

One day in Monte Carlo a boy that talked soprano asked him to have a drink. Jimmy told him to go to hell; he didn't want to be seen talking to him, and the fellow leaned over and said: "... but I know a place where they don't know either of us; up an alley."

And Jimmy said: "That's where my friends go."

A young American who had left the navy after a submarine accident a few years before used to come and play chess.

The dollar had dropped and the cost of living had gone up till the poor lieutenant was going around in need of a haircut and a new pair of shoes, living on tinned salmon and sandwiches.

He sat in the corner of Monsieur Gay's Cave, looking like a blond beach-comber among those Monégasques, and played chess with anyone who wanted a game, and if you stood there and watched them, sort of concentrating your eyes on their two hands, the chess men and the board, and not looking at their faces, it gave you an impression of the incongruous.

The board and chessmen were cheap, worn smooth, and the hand on one side was slender and white and had an Annapolis, '22 ring on it, while the other was brown and scraggly like trees along the Var.

The rough hand smelled of fish or horses or a taxi, and a chess board was all it had in common with the white one; it was their only means of conversation but they marched months away at it.

The young American had lost his hearing when the sub went down, so he did the talking, and when he found anyone to listen he took a paper out of his pocket, a picture of a Brixham trawler.

He was eating his heart out to go back to sea. Every month he was going to buy that boat next month and fit it up and live on it, and every time you went to the bistro you could see him in a corner showing someone how he was going to make a saloon out of the fish-hold, but every month he got thinner and a bit more seedy and further from his trawler.

One day the Annapolis midshipman cruise put in at Villefranche, just up the coast, and the Principality was full of boys in uniform. Everyone in the bistro thought of the "Jeune Americain" and what a fine time he would have talking to them, but no one seemed to know where he was.

After a couple of days he met some of the midshipmen and told them about Tom. We went up to his room to surprise him and when we got there we were sorry we had come.

He had the look of a man who had been through a siege, and "middies" were the last people on earth he wanted to see. The boat they were from was one he had been on, and their officers had been classmates of his. Now he wasn't one of them any more; he was "on the beach."

They dragged him aboard for a

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meal and he saw where he used to sleep, and the place where he kept a pet duck once. He talked about Honolulu and the China coast with men he used to sail with, and two days later when the ships sailed away he watched till he couldn't see them any more. Then he came back to the bistro and gave Monsieur Gay a carton of Camels a "middy" named Osborne had given him, and Gay gave Tommy a drink.

Two Corsicans sat in a corner talking about the battle of Austerlitz as though it were yesterday, drawing Goldbrook and Pratzon on the back of a Havas news bulletin.

They knew all of Napoleon's campaigns by heart and could tell you what he should have done and why he didn't, and when they were blue they also cheered themselves up with: "Up to Grenoble I was an adventurer; after Grenoble I was Emperor." Things might be all right tomorrow.

Black Harry stood at the bar and said good-bye, in case he didn't get back again, because he was going away in a week, and everyone asked him to have a last drink for the road. Harry had been going away next week for the past ten years. It was just like the young American's trawler.

Outside our "Cave" the same round of gossip went on. An old countess with a failing for young men set one up in a bar but she wouldn't let him give us credit towards the end of the month, so on principle we stuck to Gay's when we had money.

One night he called for his hat, gloves, and stick and ran away with one of her friends, and we were delighted.

Alfonso, of Spain, walked in the Café de Paris and looked around for someone to talk to.

A pretty demi-mondaine sat alone near the door and the Englishman who was keeping her walked in without a bow or a sign of recognition as he passed, but Alphonso nodded to her and said: "Bon soir, Juliette! Toujours ici?" Then, as he pulled a chair out to sit down and have a coffee with her he said: "May I have the honor?"

He was a great man!

Pirelli, the Italian tire king, ordered to bring his capital back to Italy, threw big chips on the tables for a week before he got rid of the four million francs he was trying to throw away.

Lady M....., she who had once torn thousand-franc notes in two and sent half-notes to gigolos with a card saying the other half would be under her pillow at ten-thirty, led her five "pekes" through the gardens and told stories of the old days to whoever would listen.

Tommy, the American, couldn't afford cinemas so he sat in Monsieur Gay's and played chess or amused himself by making the old sea-dog angry. Neither of them

had anyone else to talk to, and when they talked they fought about their respective navies. What made it worse was that Tommy was so deaf the old skipper couldn't fight back. Frustration drove him crazy.

French warships put in for a few days, officers drank with us and then quietly sailed away, but when the Italian fleet put in they turned on the ballyhoo, twined olive branches around their guns and invited all the peasants in the country-side to come aboard for a drink. They gave a ball at the casino, in all their gold braid and ribbons, and threw a fireworks display for the people back on the mountain.

Anyone with an eye to politics would say Mussolini was cocking an eye on the Côte d'Azur, but our bunch up at Gay's was too carefree to bother about it.

The influx of people who ate regularly sort of changed the lives of everyone in that bar; it wasn't only a hands-across-the-seas gesture, it spanned a number of other gulfs as well. Before we knew it men came out of the Casino and didn't want the carriage by the steps but looked around for the driver they had had a drink with the night before in Gay's.

All the insolvent foreigners who had been putting their drinks on Monsieur Gay's cuff showed up at a cocktail party one day, invited by a lady someone had brought to the bistro, and at her home they met a lot of new people who invited them to more parties, and the first thing they knew they were going some place for tea almost every day, and that served as breakfast. They rifled the card-tray as they left.

After tea they dropped in some place else for a cocktail and ate all the almonds; that was luncheon, and if they couldn't go anywhere else for dinner they could always go back to Monsieur Gay's, dropping a handful of titled cards in an American widow's mail box as they passed. She said these foreigners were always chasing her.

There were newspapers to read in Gay's place, and every time they said anything about a new war or a revolution, a young shopkeeper's son who belonged to "L'Action Française," the French Royalist party, with me, and I, would write a letter to one side, and sometimes both, on Monsieur Gay's stationery to see if we could get into it. Then we tried to talk Nino, the gigolo, into going along while waiting for an answer.

One day we read where Ibn Saud had swooped down on Yemen, and for some reason the name appealed to me. Ibn Saud had landed at Hodeidah and was preparing to march on Sana, where the Imam Yaya, the toothless, the holy one, was sitting in an empty throne room underneath a semitar and I wrote and asked if he had a place in his service for the

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first-born son of the God of Luck.

As I went down through the gardens to mail the letter, thinking of troops and market places and bazaars and coffee houses at night when a victorious army is smashing things and singing, words went across my mind in an endless chain like the electric news bulletin across the side of a building in Montparnasse, starting on one side and falling off the other and never stopping.

"Gloire Militaire," and a bronze statue of Marshal Ney, at the foot of Boulevard de l'Observatoire, in Paris, swinging a sword and calling over his shoulder to shadows somewhere behind to follow, Napoleon's statue looking down on the cour d'honneur and saying: "I am the little Corsican boy who opened shop with nothing and came to deal in empires."

Up ahead, in the gardens an old man with a miserable face sat wrapped in blankets, waiting for Me Dermott, his secretary, to help him into a black Rolls Royce with Z.Z. on the door. It was old Zaharoff, but I didn't stop to look at him, I was off to mail a letter that might get us on to the train that goes where la gloire is... adventure militaire, not money.

Nino was the only likeable gigolo on the Riviera, from a man's point of view. His sister

was a famous singer, and sometimes Monsieur Gay would loan him ten francs to get his stiff shirts out of the laundry.

He was just lazy; a conscientious objector against work, with a feeling that dancing was next to blacksmithing, and women were pains in the neck. None of that getting them drunk and drawing up a will or a marriage contract for him; all he wanted was enough room rent and meals, with something left over to buy his share of drinks in the daytime.

If some widow asked him what he would have to drink, he usually said a steak, and if he made enough early in the evening, he knocked off work and went out to spend it. Dancing was like pushing a plow to him.

Understanding misunderstood women for a living is the hardest job on earth. It had taught him to say "yes" in ten languages, but that was about all it had given him, and I remember the night the *Petit Nicois* came out with a small item down in the corner about a skirmish at a well someplace in Abyssinia; the Frenchman and I were sitting at the bar of Jacques Ferrero's Perroquet in Beausoleil, hoping to God there would be a war; Nino said it couldn't be worse than Monte Carlo.

Prudence Van Tyne-Whitfield

and her fiancé, a young Italian Marquis, who couldn't marry her because she was American, sat next to us and didn't say anything.

The Frenchman and I got up and went to charge another drink at Monsieur Gay's while we wrote a letter.

Gay loaned us a stamp to mail it to the Ethiopian Legation in Paris. "To be a soldier is a noble thing," he said.

His most prized possession was a suitcase some colonel, who had committed suicide after a bad night in the casino, left in lieu of three thousand francs Monsieur Gay had loaned him. Telling us about it he held his palms up: "Le pauvre homme didn't have money so he paid with his life; and he left me his suitcase. Oh! that man was a soldier!"

But he didn't have any use for writers. Frank Harris and Michael Arlen were nobodies, and Blasco Ibanez had ruined Mentone as far as he was concerned. Phillips Oppenheim was a blight on the Riviera; they were people who stole the things others did and put them on paper and got paid for it.

"Writers never do anything themselves; they are leeches," he said.

The coachmen and waiters and valets-de-chambre that frequented

Cave Flora had a story on everyone because they worked in hotels that the paths of people with stories all lead to sooner or later. They knew why Nancy Miller and her Maharajah didn't speak to Lord and Lady Reading when they passed on the terrace.

Indore was just another homeless wanderer, going from one glittering resort to another and frantically putting coins in slot machines in the Hotel de Paris.

Someone said he would make a good story but Monsieur Gay said: "Bah!"

When Her Serene Highness, the Princesse Hereditaire went up before the little parliament on the rocher and asked for a divorce and permission to renounce her prerogatives as Princesse de Monaco and Duchesse de Valentinois to marry a man she loved, the bistro was full of gossip.

She said she had recognized her obligations to her dynasty and country by marrying a man she had no love for, and such debt as she owed her dynasty she had repaid by giving two heirs to the old throne of Grimaldi; now she asked to be freed from that obligation and allowed to marry a commoner and live in a villa just over the frontier, but they refused her.

Stormy scenes followed. Some sided with the princess and some

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against her. They take their politics seriously, and listening to them you would think an Empire was at stake instead of a little space of sea-front where an old order still lingered, a little niche of Europe that wanted peace and quiet and a Prince to shout to.

There was a lot of courage and pathos in Princesse Charlotte's story, but we didn't see poetry in it then.

A debate raged on the rocher over the naturalization of boats, and a Monégasque patriot leaped to his feet with a speech on Monégasque waters for Monégasque ships.

He brought the house down, and listeners imagined great liners and yachts trying to escape taxation were at stake, but no. He was referring to row-boats that fish along the coast.

These were momentous matters to them. Not stories men with weak chins cook up in an arm-chair.

There was a red-haired woman in a villa at the top of Boulevard de l'Observatoire. She wasn't young and she wasn't beautiful, but there was something fine about that woman.

No one ever referred to her as Madame A—. Everyone called her "la maitresse du Prince"; sort of like a title, and petty people who would have snubbed her in New York and London, soaked up her kindness like blotters.

Her house was always open for a spot of tea or a cocktail and you might meet anyone from the King of Sweden to Sid Chaplin there. The exiled Prince Andrew of Greece and the Laird of Castle Cary used to come.

I went up for a last cocktail and a "good-bye" before I went away.

Harney Read, the nice old American with a soft voice and grey hair, was looking out over the Mediterranean.

Off in the direction of Corsica, just visible on the horizon, was a sail, and Harney stood looking at

it with a cocktail half-way to his lips.

He said: "That poor little boat. It's been hovering out there all day, trying to get away from here, and I love them for it."

Agnes Chilton invited me over to Cannes for a last fling at the Casino. Maurice Burke leaned over and said: "There is Madame D..... You know she used to be the world's best-dressed woman. Remarkably beautiful for one that's been bed-ridden for fifteen years. N'est ce pas?" But it didn't seem amusing then. It was the first part of September, 1935.

The Prince of Wales sat at a table, fumbling nervously with a faded blue polka-dot scarf around his neck and talking to an American woman named Mrs. Simpson.

The Prince had on a wrinkled pair of beach trousers and an old sweater, and Georges Carpentier, the prize-fighter, looking like a Prince, strolled by in evening clothes, nodded to him as he passed.

Winston Churchill, chewing on a black cigar, sat at a baccarat table, and didn't greet the Prince.

It seems there is a ruling that members of the Royal Family, travelling abroad are considered incognito, and are not to be greeted unless they nod first.

A Spanish Marquise, one of the richest women in Spain, went by with a gigolo and the wild look of cocaine in her eyes.

If you had looked for tragedy or the mark of greatness on any of them you would probably have picked Carpentier.

I met Charlie Perrin, out for a walk with the countess' dog, the morning I went away, and he took my Toledo blades over and borrowed a hundred francs from the countess for me. Pawning swords for money to go to war on seems paradoxical, and leaving France when one didn't have to seems foolish now, but youth does not think of things like that.

Somehow I never got to send

Continued on page 228

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We Never Noticed Carcassonne

Continued from pages 85-223-224-227

Monsieur Gay a check from Addis Ababa, and when the Italians took the bank I couldn't.

When I had money I put it off and when I was broke I grinned to myself and pictured Monsieur Gay telling about the colonel and the opera singer and me now, and I wondered if I ought to write him a letter.

Eventually I got back to Monte Carlo but it wasn't the same. Nino, the gigolo, never came back. He had been killed in Badoglio's advance, they said, and his compatriots who hadn't gone to war seemed to hold me responsible for it.

The Italian owner of the Knickerbocker night club chucked me out, and since he was a sort of test case before calling on Monsieur Gay I was afraid to call. It would hurt if he cut me and Fascists would hurt him if he didn't.

Black Harry, reading a paper in the atrium of the casino, said he was getting ready to go away in a week or two.

Monsieur la Motte wanted some Abyssinian stamps and Albert, the Italian barman, asked if I had operated on any of his countrymen. He said nothing had happened around there.

"Le Petit Capitaine" had left after a bad week at the tables, and the young American naval officer was gone. He had talked about his Brixham trawler at tea and cocktail parties till some women got together and gave him money to go to England and get it.

No one had heard of him since. The coachmen shook their heads and envied him, down in the South Seas some place with his trawler, and Monsieur Gay took his bar bill down from where it was stuck in the corner of the mirror behind the bar and put it away with the others, they told me.

Up on the cliffs toward Mentone I could see Roquebrune and the little house I had my heart set on buying someday. I'd try another fling at the big world and then come back and get it.

There is an old chateau in Roquebrune that the Saracens built with narrow, winding streets around it; the old building where General Bonaparte slept and a square with a fountain in it.

Doorways have little shrines over them, and at night you can walk along the ramparts where the guards of the Count of Roquebrune used to walk and look down on Monaco and the sea.

In winter it is warm there up on the side of the mountain, and in the summer it is cool. Life is all red tiled roofs and blue sea and green palms and a lot of time for dreaming. France is to the right and Monaco below and over to the left is Italy. The Alps are behind, and on a clear day you can see Corsica rising out of the Mediterranean a hundred and thirty miles away.

That town was a lovely little place that tourists hadn't found yet, and I was coming back to it some day.

I went back to the Hotel de Paris to pack my bags, and when I came down to go to the station I passed an American pianist that an old lady had left a villa to.

You would think he would stop working and play awhile; follow wars and go where boats go now that he is rich, but he seems to have forgotten how. He was going around with another old woman, and looking at him I didn't feel sorry for Nino any more; he was well out of it.

The years passed, out of one trouble spot and into another, and I never sent Gay that check or made enough to go back to Roquebrune.

On a tawdry street in Shanghai the voice of Carol Alcott, the newscaster, droned from a radio, describing the last days of the France we used to know, and I wiped a tear out of my eye.

There is no boat to take us back now, passports have limitations stamped in them. If we want to go back to France we must go back fighting and the longer we wait the further it will drift from being the place we knew and want to live in again.

When I look back at those old days and faces and years, tossed to the winds like scraps of torn paper, I wonder:

What ever happened to old man Gay when the debacle came? Did the men he had been feeding all those years get him out with them when they fled? I wonder if my bar bill is still stuck on the mirror behind the comptoir.

I wonder who was right: Nino, who wouldn't try, or the American boy who cleared out while he had a boat, or old Zaharoff, sitting in the garden and letting those go to war who wanted to.

He didn't make us write that letter...

The French boy who wanted to go away with me, at the last minute changed his mind. He had a little bit of land and some olive trees. He wanted to see far places too, but when he thought of Marseilles and Notre Dame de La Garde and the land falling away behind him it was too much for him. He couldn't go.

The rich American women went home where wars couldn't touch them, and I bought a ticket for the place I thought I would find one.

The sad part of it is, when I look back now, we were all like Prince Danilo.

The towers of Carcassonne were right there, but we never bothered to see them. Now all of us are exiles.

The only one I feel sorry for is good old Gay. If all the men he fed and was never paid by were to want to go back, together they would make General de Gaulle a fine foreign legion. #

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THE MAGAZINE FOR MEN

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